

4/27/2009 This Week in Congress

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April 27, 2009

Dear Friend,

Welcome to "This Week in Congress." I hope you find this newsletter useful.

Opening the Fort Riley State Veterans Cemetery in a Dedication Ceremony

On Friday, I participated in the dedication ceremony for the Fort Riley State Veterans Cemetery. Cemetery construction began in the fall of 2007 after the State of Kansas was awarded federal dollars through the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) for the cemetery. After the post cemetery at Fort Riley was declared full 14 years ago, public officials, members of state government and Kansas veterans worked to establish a new veterans cemetery. The new cemetery will provide burial space for thousands of Kansas veterans and will provide a location to properly honor our state's fallen service members and their dependants.

I was joined at the ceremony by Brigadier General Perry Wiggins; former Kansas State Senator, Lana Oleen; Congresswoman Lynn Jenkins; and Director of the National Cemetery Administration, Frank Salvias. Thank you to Kafer Peele, cemetery program director for the Kansas Commission on Veterans' Affairs, for inviting me to attend. [Click here](#)

for photos of the event.

Subcommittee Hearing Addressed Producer Concerns with Crop Insurance

On Wednesday, I attended a hearing held by the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management to get producers' views on the effectiveness of the federal crop insurance program. The Subcommittee heard from ten different witnesses representing a wide variety of farm organizations and commodity groups. All stressed the importance of crop insurance to production agriculture, but had various suggestions about how to improve the product. The information given by these witnesses will be useful as the Agriculture Committee looks at ways to improve the crop insurance program. I was pleased to receive a Kansas perspective from Jarrod Spillman of Hoxie, Kansas. Jarrod testified on behalf of the National Sorghum Producers Association. [Click here for a photo.](#)

Site Location for National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility Challenged

This week, the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) decision, made in January, to locate the National Bio and Agro-Defense Facility (NBAF) in Manhattan was challenged. News reports cited a potential federal lawsuit to be filed by the Texas Biological and Agro-Defense Consortium to challenge the site selection process that chose Kansas for NBAF.

A thorough and fair evaluation process by DHS over a number of years concluded that Kansas State University was the best location for the facility. Kansas was chosen over the other contenders by being recognized as having the infrastructure, the knowledge and the commitment to ensure that NBAF's mission will be fulfilled.

Attending the Opening of the Kansas Wetlands Education Center in Cheyenne Bottoms

Also on Friday, I attended the grand opening of the Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KWEC) that overlooks the Cheyenne Bottoms. The Cheyenne Bottoms, near Great Bend, is the largest inland marsh in the United States. The KWEC houses exhibits to educate and inform Kansans about the geological beginnings of the area. The education center allows people to learn about the significance of the animals and plants that live in the Cheyenne Bottoms. The Nature Conservancy and the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks are recognizable for their efforts to help create the KWEC. Fort Hays State University has also played a vital role for the creation of the education center.

Thanks to Lisa Karlin and Terry Mannell with Fort Hays State University for inviting me to attend.

Kansas Association of School Business Officials Annual Convention

While in Hays, I attended the Kansas Association of School Business Officials Annual Convention. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss issues with our state's educators. Thank you to Karen Schadel for asking me to attend.

Annual Listening Tour Continues in the Big First

This week, I added the following stops to my annual listening tour:

Saturday, May 2

Kiowa County Tour Stop, Greensburg

Time: 11:30 AM to 12:30 PM

Location: 547 Arts Center

Address: 204 W. Wisconsin

Friday, May 8

Finney County Tour Stop, Garden City

Time: 12:00 to 1:00 PM

Location: 3i Show

Address: 409 Lake Avenue, Finney County Fairgrounds

Residents are invited to attend the town halls to share their thoughts with me on current issues. [Click here](#) for a list of upcoming stops and to see where I have already been this year.

In the Office

Dr. Charles Rice of Manhattan was in with Kansas State University to talk about climate change legislation. Jim and Debbie Brown, John Rogers and Sherry Workman of Wichita; Jess and Gayla Fisher of Arkansas City; Brand and Rita Tucker of Wellington; Kenny and Shirley Spanier of Garden City; Mike Strong of Hutchinson; and Gloria Homeier of Manhattan were in with the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations to talk about prospects for Congress passing the Consumer Rental Purchase Agreement Act. Mandi Chervitz of Lawrence was in with the College Fraternity and Sorority Leaders to talk about legislation that would support our nation's colleges and universities and their ability to modernize student housing.

Kyle Dimitt of Johnson City and Jordann Wiltfong of Stockton were in with Close-Up to visit with me about my duties as a Member of Congress and to tell me about their experiences while in Washington. Ed Fogerty, Bill Gordon, Duane Konrady and Curby Hughes of Olathe were in with the Mid America Green Industry Council to discuss the H2B visa program and its effect on their businesses.

Dr. William Clifford of Garden City was in with the American Academy of Ophthalmology to share with me his thoughts about Medicare reimbursement rates, research initiatives at the National Eye Institute and the future of rural health care. Ron Casey of Topeka and Toni Caldwell of DeSoto were in with the American Society of Radiological Technologists to advocate for legislation aimed at making medical imaging and radiation therapy safer for the patient through increasing

equipment operator education.

Katie Fast of Salina, Amanda Horne of Overland Park, Kim Morrissey of Wichita and Linda DeCoursey of Topeka were in with the American Heart Association to visit with me about the need to fully fund heart and stroke research initiatives and to provide a proper level of preventative care through technology and healthier lifestyle habits. Joe Conroy of Emporia, Ronda Brammer and Donna Wierthaler of Wichita, Kendra James of Goddard, Paul Hertel of Shawnee and Christopher Hogan of Lawrence were in with the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists to explain the need for equitable Medicare and Medicaid practices. Mary Courtney of Rolla and Larry Dreiling of Hays dropped by to visit.

Renee Hahn of Wichita, Sandy Kuhlman of Phillipsburg, Karren Weichert and Ellen Wheeler of Topeka and Mason Hackley of Prairie Village were in with the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization to discuss the growing need for affordable long-term care and the quality of care provided by their services. Cheryl Semmel of Topeka, Dr. Jill Schackelford of Kansas City and Dr. John Heim of Emporia were in with the United School Administrators of Kansas to give me an update on stimulus allocation and the need for reform in early childhood education as well as post-secondary student financial assistance eligibility.

Dr. Ray Lumb and Paul Livingston of Topeka were in with Select Medical Corporation to tell me about Long-Term Acute Care regulatory requirements and the need for uniform, stable standards for the industry to meet while new standards are under negotiation. Mark Feathers of Emporia was in with the American Orthotic and Prosthetic Association to share his experience in veterans' service and to update me on initiatives being taken by his industry to provide custom fitted products to ensure effectiveness. Jean Bryant and Jannet McCracken of Cimarron, Shelia Brown of Meade, Debra Zehr of Topeka and Valerie McGhee of Wichita were in with Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging to brief me on the need to include long term care in the national health reform discussion.

Jarrold and Denise Spillman of Hoxie were in with the National Sorghum Producers to visit about his testimony before the House Agriculture Subcommittee on General Farm Commodities and Risk Management. Paul Horel of Overland Park was in with the Crop Insurance Research Bureau to give me an update on issues concerning the crop insurance industry. Dennis and Sharon Schwartz of Tecumseh, Sam Atherton of Cherryvale, Elmer Ronnebaum of Seneca and Tony Grant of Kansas City were in with the Kansas Rural Water Association to share information about the challenges of maintaining rural water districts in Kansas.

Col. Bob Ulin of Fort Leavenworth was in with the Command and General Staff College Foundation to express his support for the Five-Star Generals Commemorative Coin Act. Gary LaGrange of Manhattan was in with the Kansas Council of Chapters of the Military Officers Association to brief me on TRICARE health fees, benefits for military widows and disabled retirees and sustaining military manpower. Phillip and Lynne Kelling of Shawnee Mission, William Saunders of Olathe, Katherine Anderson of Lawrence and Randall Hardy of Salina were in with the American Rental Association to visit with me about small business health care, estate taxes and labor legislation. Sarah Hill-Nelson and Stephen Hill of Lawrence were in with Bowersock Mills to visit with me about renewable energy legislation.

Several Kansans visited my Washington, D.C., office this week to receive a tour of the United States Capitol, including Ed and Mary Hammond of Hay;,, Hua Wu and Zhao Yuanyuan, two visiting students from China; Stanley and Orvalee Aldrich of Garfield; Marc, Jos, Hannah, Matthew and Jason Dreier of Topeka; and Stony Wilson and Jeff Newsum of Hutchinson. Also receiving tours were Jarrod and Denise Spillman of Hoxie; Doyle and Charlotte Rahjes of Agra; Phillip and Lynne Kelling of Shawnee Mission; Dustin, Shelly and Shaylin Petz of Goodland; Nathan and Megan Grebowiec of Plainville; Chuck, Marla, Megan, Matthew and Mason Goeckel; Paula, Allison and Luke Schnell of Beloit, and Kelly Bender of Greensburg.

Very truly yours,

Jerry